

Customer Case:

MASSTOR MASS TAPE BACK-UP SYSTEM SAVES NATWEST A UKP150m NEW BUILDING

April, 1987

There are a lot of people who haven't heard of Masstor Systems Corp – according to the company's own promotional video. And, judging by its financial performance between its public offering in 1983 and well into last year, some of those who have heard of Masstor, namely early investors, must have wished they hadn't.

But, with a profitable end to 1986 and several major orders in the first part of 1987, the fortunes of the on-line mass storage company had taken a dramatic turn for the better even before National Westminster Bank's decision last week substantially to expand its \$6.5m investment in Masstor equipment. T

he bank is to spend \$7.3m over the next two years – two-thirds of it in 1988 – on Masstor's M860 product.

Based on the concept of IBM's now discontinued 3850 honeycomb recording mass storage system, the M860 consists of the microcode-driven M862 controller, configured as an IBM 3420 or 3480, with up to four 55 Gigabyte M861 modules on a string. Each M861 has 316 cartridges, each with 256 volumes. Up to two M862s can be cross-linked to produce a total of 440Gb on-line.

One controller with one module costs around UKP400,000 and, on average, such a configuration takes between 20 and 25 seconds to access 4Mb on the M860.

Masstor targets the M860 at the top 500 computer installations, so most of its sales as one would expect are into IBM MVS mainframe environments.

However, the device can be attached to other hardware such as the Sperry 1100 through a Massnet network, is sold OEM to Control Data Corp and Cray Research Inc and will shortly be enhanced with an SNA interface which will allow other hardware to be attached.

VM support, an increase in the data transfer rate and a DisOSS interface are currently under development, the latter primarily, says European managing director Steve Lord, to meet European demand.

The key to the M860 according to Lord is the software that accompanies the hardware. In the MVS environment, for example, Storage Management Task software interrupts the operating system when input-output calls are made to consult a disk-based directory which then allocates resources.

Lord does not fear competition from optical disks as he believes there are massive improvements still to come from Masstor's technology.

The Sony Mini 8 video film, which uses similar video recording techniques to the M860, currently has a much higher packing density than Masstor's product.

Lord says with demand for disk storage going up 40% per annum but technology only improving by around 15% the opportunities for Masstor are growing. He expects a 35% improvement in volume this year.

For National Westminster Bank, the M860 means it can have the seven years of financial records it needs on-line without having to spend UKP150m on a new building to house the 3380 disk drives it would otherwise have to buy.